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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7909
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1349
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4874
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8437
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5999
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3896
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1854
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000558

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: KEY KACHIN GROUPS TO FORM POLITICAL PARTY

REF: A. RANGOON 215

[1](#)B. RANGOON 305

Classified By: Pol Officer Sean O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. A leading Kachin peace negotiator told us a consortium of three leading Kachin organizations recently agreed to form a single political party and to participate in the 2010 parliamentary elections. While the regime has assured Kachin cease-fire groups they would not have to surrender their arms yet, our contact pointed out that so far officials have ignored their calls to discuss lingering political concerns. Regime officials did not object in principle to the consortium's decision to form a political party, but they cautioned Kachin leaders it was too early to register any new political entities. Despite their decision to participate for now, Kachin leaders suggested they may boycott the elections if the regime does not address their concerns beforehand. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Kachin peace negotiator Saboi Jum told Poloff a consortium of three leading Kachin groups have agreed to form a political party and to participate in the parliamentary elections scheduled for 2010. Leaders from the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), Kachin Defense Army (KDA), and National Democratic Army Kachin (NDAK) met on June 11, 13, and 19th to discuss the way forward following May's constitutional referendum. While they doubted the elections would be free and fair, the members of this consortium - dubbed the Kachin Consultative Assembly (Assembly) - agreed that they needed to speak with one voice in the lead-up to the 2010 elections. Saboi Jum acknowledged that much still needed to be worked out, and conceded the consortium could splinter or decide to quit the regime's political process between now and 2010.

[1](#)3. (C) Despite regime officials' assurances to the contrary, Saboi Jum said Kachin cease-fire groups remained concerned the regime would force them to disarm before addressing their key demands regarding autonomy and federalism (ref B). He noted that the regime continued to ignore repeated invitations by the KIO and others to discuss their concerns, including a written appeal to Than Shwe. Additionally, many Kachin leaders continued to harbor serious concerns about the regime's "roadmap." Few believed the May referendum was free and fair. Saboi Jum added that it was also grossly mismanaged. As an example, he told us that, because he is a

clergyman, officials in Kachin State prohibited him from voting, but said when he returned to Rangoon a few weeks later, local officials actually encouraged him to vote (he voted no). Saboi Jum said most Kachin had similar doubts about the elections scheduled for 2010, seeing little chance of their being free or fair with Than Shwe in power.

¶4. (C) Representatives at the June Assembly meetings recognized that individual members of armed cease-fire organizations would have to formally leave these groups before forming an independent political party and participating in the 2010 elections. Nonetheless, Saboi Jum expected this new party, while technically independent, would still have close ties to the cease-fire groups whose members created it. Additionally, he said KIO, KDA, and NDAK leaders had no intention of disarming until the regime adequately addressed their concerns. He pointed out that the cease-fire agreements signed with the regime allowed these groups to retain their arms until their political concerns were adequately addressed in the constitutional process. In exchange, the cease-fire groups agreed to suspend hostilities and participate in the "roadmap to democracy." But Saboi Jum cautioned that if the status quo continued, the possibility of a break in the ceasefire would remain a real, albeit distant, possibility.

¶5. (C) The Assembly informed the regime of its June meetings and decision to form a political party, according to Saboi Jum. While authorities did not object in principle to the creation of a party, they cautioned participants that it was still too early to start registering new political entities.

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Most members of the Assembly believed the authorities' reluctance to discuss the specifics of party registration meant the regime had not yet issued instructions on how to do so. Saboi Jum noted, however, that the fact the Assembly was permitted to hold their meetings demonstrated the relative latitude local officials continued to grant Kachin cease-fire groups.

¶6. (C) Comment: Kachin cease-fire groups continue to hold out hope the regime's roadmap will eventually bear fruit, despite all evidence to the contrary. The KIO, KDA, and NDAK should be commended, however, for agreeing to work together and encouraged to follow through. This strengthens their position against the regime's divide-and-rule tactics. Their challenge will be maintaining unity, and encouraging other groups to join in to compel the regime to seriously discuss the political way forward. Otherwise the regime risks greater instability despite its claims that the military must retain its dominant position in political life for stability.

End Comment.

VILLAROSA